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Project Challenge, a federally funded project in School District 189 of East St. Louis, Illinois, includes only those public and private schools at the elementary and secondary levels with the highest concentration of disadvantaged children. Teaching personnel for the project's in-service training program are provided by Southern Illinois University. The goals--academic improvement with better motivation and attendance--are pursued through the use of 16mm educational films, along with other audiovisual materials. Enthusiastic response from staff, students, and parents has resulted in an increase in the number of technicians and specialists on the staff. Each school has a filmstrip library, tape recorders, projectors, and some facilities for the development of materials, as well as borrowing privileges from the central media center and from other schools. Future plans call for expansion into other media, additions to the existing film library, and more training of personnel. (EM/MT)

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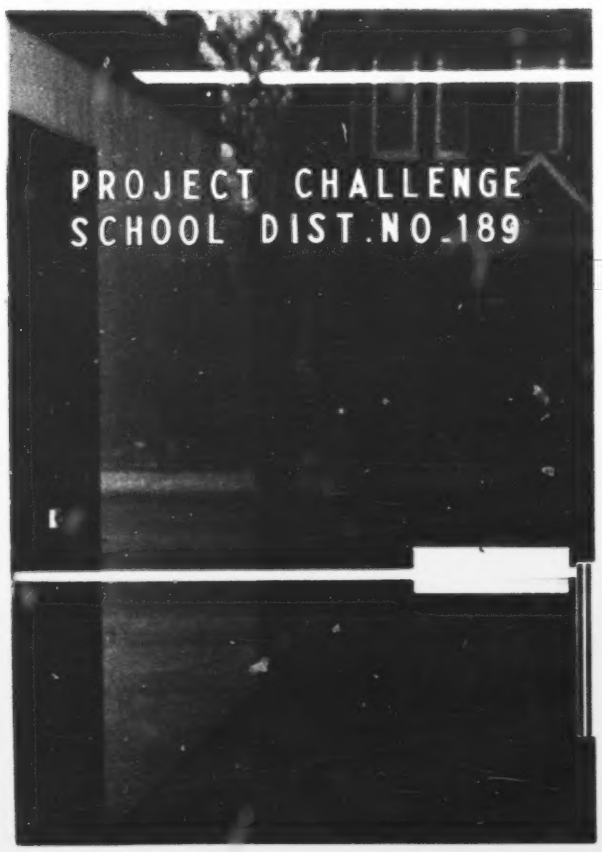
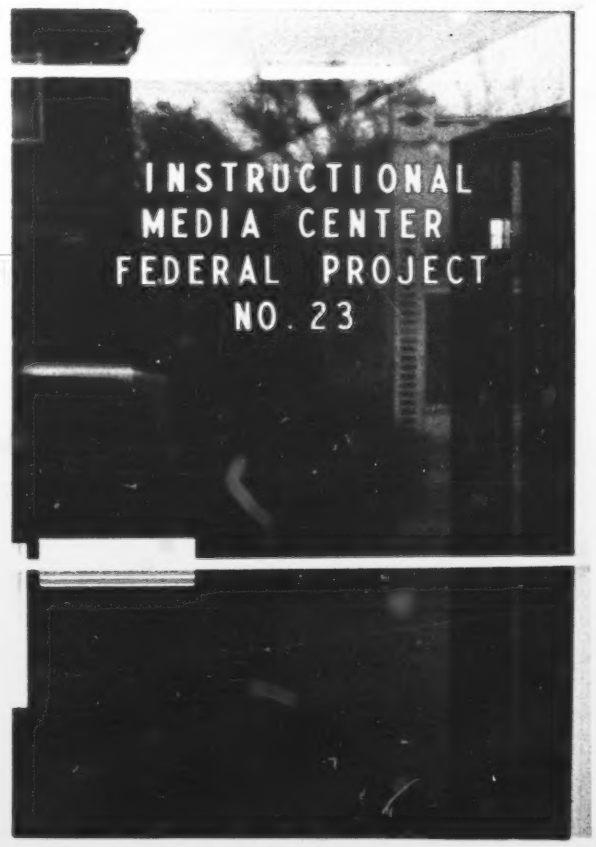
MISSION: POSSIBLE

(The Story of Project Challenge)





A Report from School District 189
East St. Louis, Illinois
May 1, 1967

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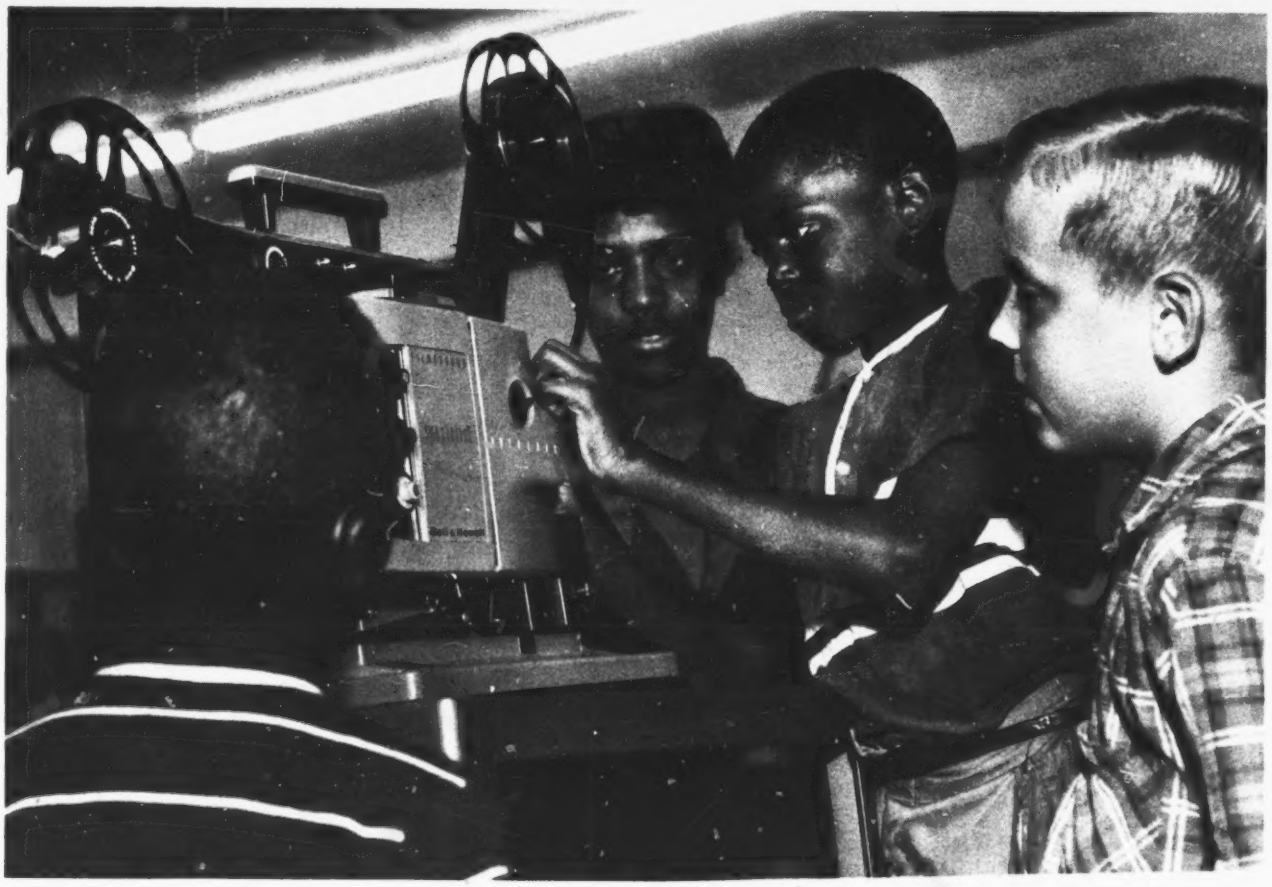


...to increase their levels of achievement

The directors and staff of Project Challenge gratefully acknowledge the cooperation and counsel of all educational suppliers who contributed to the success of this mission. Particular thanks is extended to the consultants and sales representatives of Coronet Films who assisted materially in the preparation of the project from inception to activation. Their advice was frequently sought--and generously given.

PROJECT CHALLENGE
is the name given to an innovative educational undertaking created by School District 189, East St. Louis, Illinois. It is the story of dedicated people, educationally disadvantaged children, and what happens when federal funds, under ESEA Title I, are put to work in a creative manner to meet student needs.

Project Challenge, can be, perhaps an inspiration to other school districts faced with many of the same problems. It is the beginning of a broad plan to get at the heart of the matter and to provide workable answers to the problems of providing better, more viable educational resources in a community that was faced with a growing crisis in learning.

The genesis of Project Challenge was contained in a proposal submitted late in 1965 by Dr. John T. Gunning, then superintendent, school district 189, East St. Louis, Illinois. Specifically, the proposal was entitled "AN INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA PROGRAM FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN" and was submitted under the provisions of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Public Law 89-10, Title I.

Originally the brainchild of Mr. James Conaway, federal aid coordinator for school district 189, the project was conceived to serve some 40 public and 13 parochial schools in the geographical area of school district 189. Only those schools meeting the criteria of having the highest concentration of disadvantaged children were included in Project Challenge.

The economic criteria used to determine the high concentration of disadvantaged children were:

1. The number of children in school attendance areas whose families were receiving ADC.

2. Incomes under $2000 for families who have children in school.

3. Housing standard data (available from the Urban Renewal and Planning Commission).

Educational criteria used to determine the high concentrations of disadvantaged children were the results of standardized reading tests, percentage of retentions one or more years per school, and the results of standardized achievement test data.

Project Challenge was formulated to encompass all schools that had been determined to have high concentrations of children from low income families. It was intended that approximately 13,660 educationally disadvantaged children would benefit directly from the project.

The scope of the project extends through all attendance centers and all grade levels from one to twelve. It was envisioned that students, teachers, administrators, and the community could use the facilities in a variety of ways. Approximately 94% of the disadvantaged children would be involved both during and after school hours.

Students at St. Teresa Academy prepare to view a social studies film.

It was further proposed that Project Challenge would procure the finest materials, teachers aids, and other equipment available.

To insure the fullest utilization of the opportunities to be provided by the project, a thorough in-service training program, designed and planned with Southern Illinois University personnel, was to be provided all personnel involved in this project.

The project provided further that private school children were to participate in all of the undertakings. Toward this end, a close working relationship was to be developed with the private schools to provide appropriate and sufficient services to meet the needs of their disadvantaged children.

Overall, what did Project Challenge hope to accomplish? It was anticipated that educationally disadvantaged children participating in the project would:

Mike Jett and Ed Blue, media specialists, assist at the elementary reading clinic.

Bob Kurrus, director of in-service education, demonstrates use of 16mm projector to oral language personnel.

1. Achieve more academically in school as measured by a standardized achievement test.

2. Be motivated to attempt more learning on their own.

3. Attend school more constantly.

4. Would not be retained in grade as often as in previous years.

Since it was obvious that 16mm educational films would become a major part of the learning materials component, various producers of films were called in after Project Challenge was approved and funded. Proposals were reviewed in the light of the film producers' available titles and curriculum-oriented films in the major target subject areas and Coronet Films was selected to provide a large portion of the educational motion pictures. The importance of educational films in Project Challenge was emphasized in Dr. Gunning's proposal when he stated that audiovisual materials were particularly applicable to the motivation of disadvantaged children by "bringing the far-away in time and place into the classroom, by making words stand for something and to lend meaning to facts and concepts which are vague when conveyed only in words". (Here Dr. Gunning was quoting from Freedman, Florence and Berg, Esther: Classroom Teacher's Guide to Audio-Visual Material, Chilton Company, New York, N.Y., 1961).

So much for the background of Project Challenge. Let's see what has happened in just over a year.

PROJECT CHALLENGE BEGAN IN FEBRUARY, 1966 with two administrators: Dr. Boyd Mitchell, Project Director (and now superintendent of schools in East. St. Louis), and Mr. Robert F. Kurrus, Director of In-Service Training. In March, 1966, they were joined by Mrs. Katie Wright who became Dr. Mitchell's assistant. Dr. Mitchell, incidentally, had been loaned to the school district by Southern Illinois University.

Robert F. Kurrus, director of in-service education, reviews monthly film showings statistics.

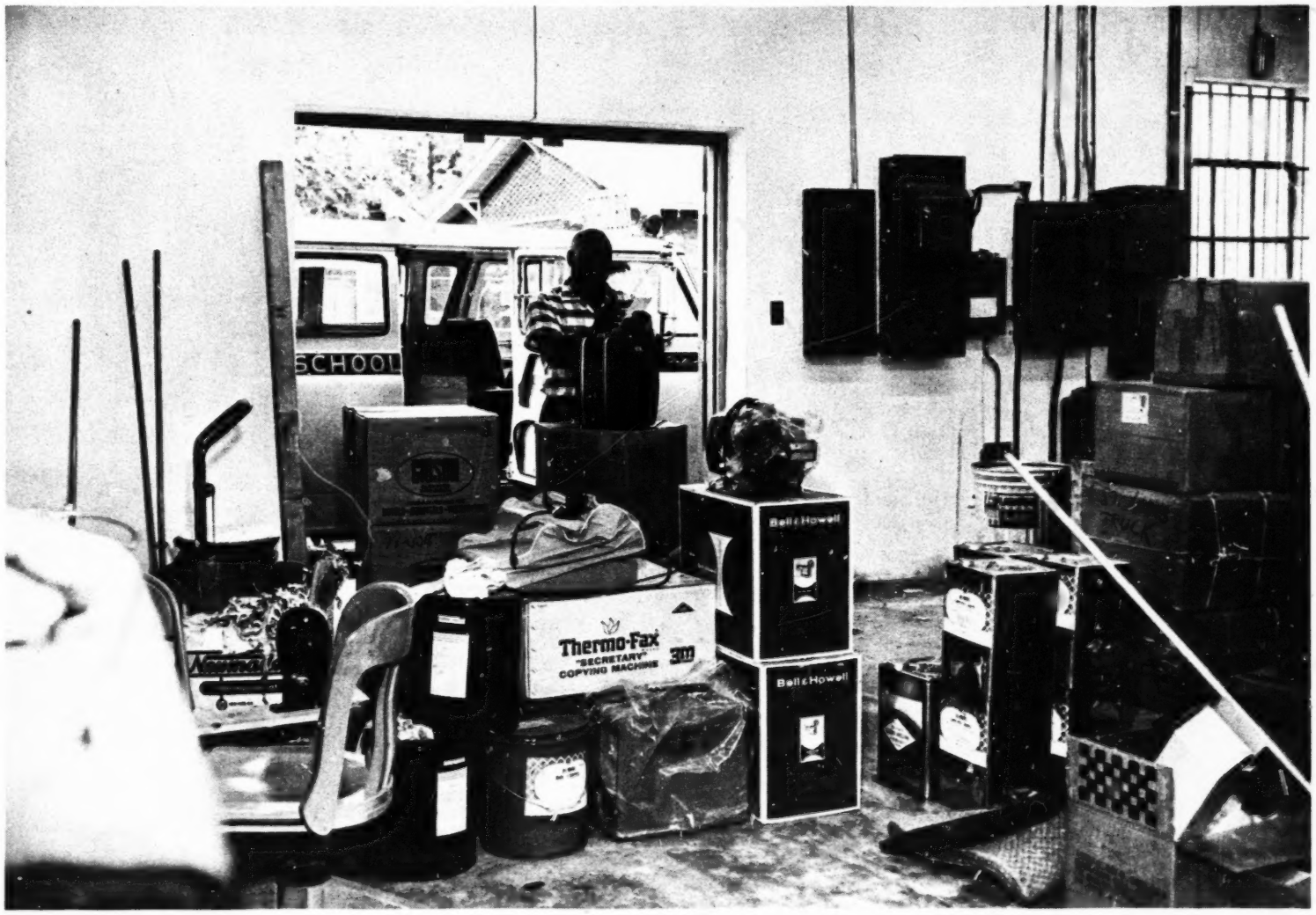
On March 15, 1966, the central Media Center was opened at 2901 Bond Avenue in East. St. Louis. This center houses the administrative offices for Project Challenge and the 5,000 print film library, a major component of Project Challenge's learning program. As preliminary and cautious acceptance of Project Challenge began to snowball into enthusiastic action and reaction during the spring and summer of 1966, nine media specialists and thirty-two technicians were added to the staff.

These dedicated Project Challenge assistants included people like media specialists Barbara Conrad, Cecil Harvey, Earlie B. Foggy, John Loveless, Thamous Wooten, Doris Cason, Tilford Brooks, Mike Jett and Ed Blue.

Other assistants included technicians Iola Anderson, Ann Ratliff, Doris Keel...Bernadine Coleman, Paul Johnson, Esther Hatcher, Bernice Ivory; tutors Jim Mussulman, Sue Brubaker; film booking clerk Lucille Hopkins; truck drivers Drew Hodges and Clyde Brazier.

In little over a year, Project Challenge has been enthusiastically accepted by teachers, students and the community.

Mrs. Katie Wright, assistant director of Project Challenge, takes a breather between planning sessions.



Drew Hodges, a Project Challenge truck driver, prepares a delivery of newly-arrived equipment.

Project Challenge staffers Lucille Hopkins, Paul Johnson, Drew Hodges, Esther Hatcher, Clyde Brazier and Bernice Ivory prepare for the day's assignments.

Media specialists Doris Cason and Barbara Conrad confer with assistant Project director, Katie Wright.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE COMMENTS that have been received--Elmo J. Bush, school administrator: "Beginning with the 1966-67 school year, the Adult Education School, with its several centers, began using the materials from the Instructional Media Center. The availability of such service has made the potential of our program greater than ever. It is bringing to the classroom of our schools experiences that were not before possible. Our teachers are delighted and excited as they become more proficient with these new tools".

Media specialist Tilford Brooks and technician May Helen Cole show 6th grade students how to use listening kits.

Louis C. Williams, teacher: "After considering the Media Center and its effects and materials, I would like to say that the Media Center has truly been instrumental in creating interest and achievement among my students... The children have developed a competitiveness which instills great desire for education".

Media specialist John Lovelace watches as oral language instructor demonstrates use of a tape recorder.

Renita Williams, student: "The Media Center is a place where you can get motion pictures, filmstrips, tape recorders and many more things. When you get these things you soon learn that you should not play with them but should use them to help with subjects like math, language, geography, history or science. Some of the films are about people, places and things we don't know about. The Media Center is a lot of help to me".

Media specialist Cecil F. Harvey and technicians Carolyn Wallace and Mary Thomas check film programming schedule.

Rev. Henry Nicholson, minister and community leader: "Project Challenge represents a truly legitimate effort to utilize available federal funds for constructive educational purposes. It fills a real need in our community".

Eddie Jackson, school principal: "...with respect to the total effect on the students, Project Challenge has aroused the interest and enthusiasm of students. Perhaps a most vital observation that should not be overlooked is the positive impact of the Media Center on the 'low achiever'. These students have gained stature among their peers and is reflected in their 'let me do it' or 'I can do it' attitude".

Mrs. Frances Alston, teacher: "In this community where educational experiences have been limited, I find visual aid materials indispensable. A new world is viewed by my first graders who thought their community was the world. The effectiveness of film viewing extends into the home... Parents are asking questions. It seems that Johnny is talking about cold germs and insists on taking too many baths".

Sherl Bartlett, student: "I like the Media Center because it helps you understand your work better".

Mrs. Bertha Anthony, teacher: "Project Challenge has been of tremendous value to my third grade class. The children seem to remember better those things seen in educational films. Understanding is improved".

TO DATE, WHAT HAS MADE PROJECT CHALLENGE TICK?

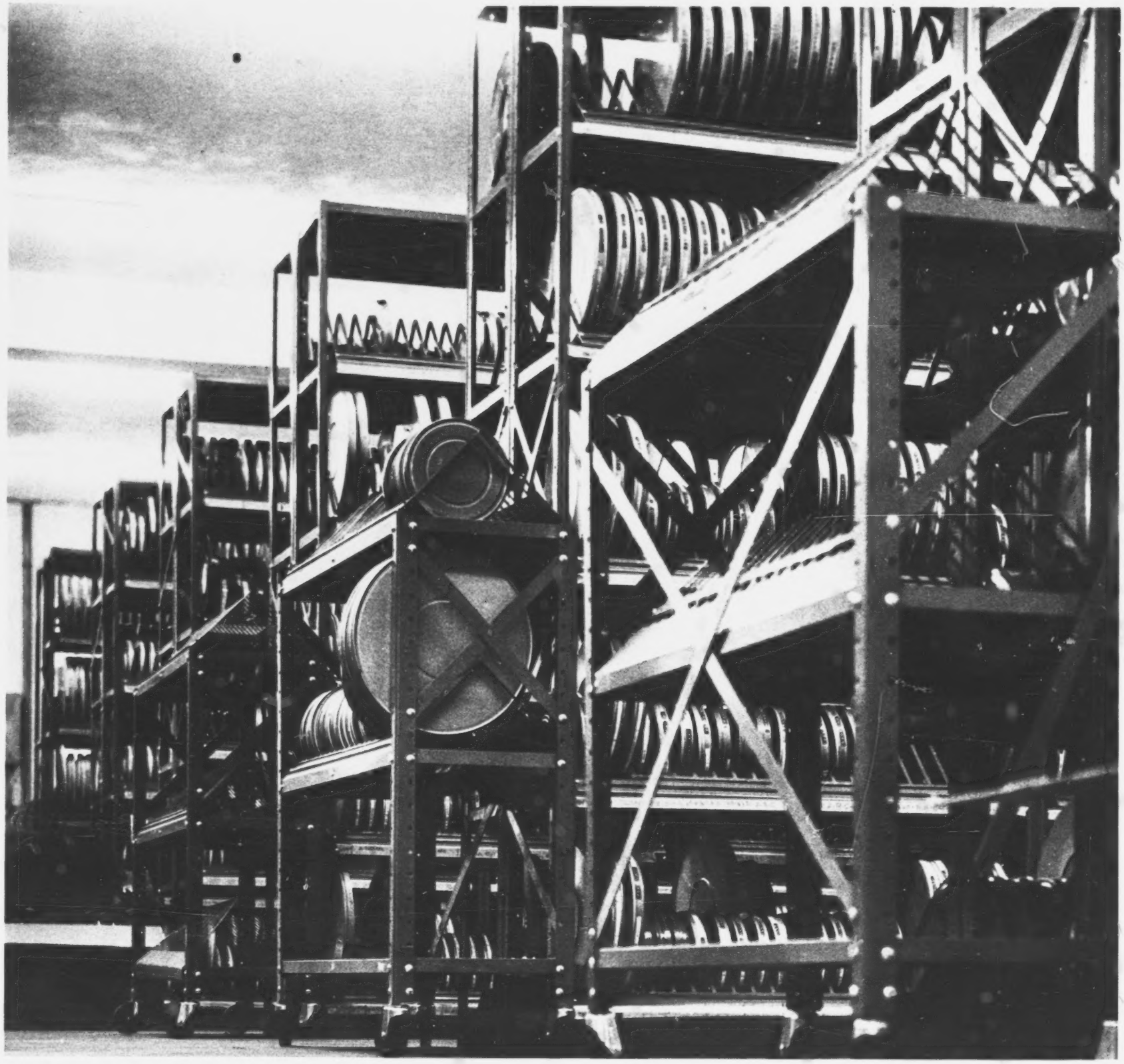
Perhaps a clue to the answer is in the instructional materials distribution system, a key factor in any educational system. Let's take a look at it.

Project Challenge has established satellite centers in twenty elementary schools, two junior high schools and one senior high school. Three parochial elementary schools and one parochial senior high school are provided equipment and materials in the same ratio as public schools.

Each satellite center is staffed by a technician and supervised by a media specialist. Parochial schools have the services of a media specialist, but do not have technicians. The media specialists are certificated and are former classroom teachers. They have the responsibility of assisting teachers in the development and preparation of specialized instructional materials. Technicians man the satellite centers...and order films and other materials from the central Media Center for teachers in the satellite schools.

To date, 198 sixteen millimeter projectors, 198 thirty-five millimeter projectors, 126 tape recorders and 126 overhead projectors have been distributed to the schools. Criteria for placing equipment included the following: the number of teaching stations in the schools; number of stories in the building, and the number of buildings on the school site. A transparency maker is also assigned to each school. Other equipment includes listening kits, individual transparency viewers, individual filmstrip viewers and record players. Children may check out filmstrips and filmstrip viewers to take home overnight.

Each public school satellite center has a filmstrip library of nearly 400 filmstrip and study print titles. (The four non-public schools borrow filmstrips from the central Media Center and they are delivered by truck). Project Challenge has two trucks which cover each project school daily to deliver 16mm films. Project Challenge owns 1800 film titles and nearly 5,000 prints. These are housed at the central Media Center and are delivered to the schools immediately upon the teacher's request.



Film racks at Project Challenge headquarters which house more than 5,000 16mm motion picture prints.

Some idea of the wide acceptance of the educational motion pictures can be gathered from this simple statement: during the 1966-67 school year, Project Challenge 16mm educational films had almost 16,000 showings. In addition, there was accelerated usage of filmstrips, transparencies, study prints and Media Center-made realia.

It is worthy of note that the equipment guidelines used for Project Challenge conform to those recommended by the Department of Audio-Visual Instruction, NEA.

Where does Project Challenge go from here?

Technicians Iola Anderson, Ann Ratcliff, and Doris Keel decorate bulletin board at Project Challenge headquarters.

Technician Bernadine Coleman demonstrates use of 16mm projector to a classroom teacher.

Media specialist Thamous Wooten and technician Charlene Hunt review operation of 35mm filmstrip projector for elementary pupils.

Plans for the future include a graphic arts department; purchase and distribution of maps, charts, globes and models; and additional in-service training for teachers. Plans also are under way to add materially to the educational motion picture and filmstrip libraries.

Project Challenge teachers are continuously suggesting the purchase and use of additional films to supplement their teaching activities in more and more subject areas. As funds become available, this will be done.

Those of us who have had anything to do with the creation and fulfillment of Project Challenge are justifiably proud of the accomplishments to date. We believe that Project Challenge has brought into sharp focus the constructive uses of the newer media, and we believe that the final result of this innovative project will be better students and better teachers.

At the beginning there were some skeptics who thought that we were moving too far, too fast. There is no longer any skepticism; it was replaced by enthusiasm months ago.

Project Challenge, at the end of one year, is already a monument to the people who made it possible.

Dr. Eldon Madison of Southern Illinois University conducts in-service training seminar as Bob Kurrus and media specialists Ed Blue, Tilford Brooks, Earlie Bea Foggy, Doris Cason, Barbara Conrad, Thamous Wooten, John Lovelace and Mike Jett listen attentively.

Project Challenge has clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of 16mm educational films - and other audiovisual materials - as basic teaching media.

Based upon our experience, we recommend to educators everywhere that audiovisual materials be well represented in every ESEA or other federally funded project. They should be included not only under Title I projects, but also under every Title that permits the acquisition of these exceptional teaching materials.

Project Challenge started out with everything the name implied: a mission with a challenge. The unselfish dedication of people... of teachers and administrators... of the students themselves... have made this mission possible.

Dr. Boyd Mitchell, original director of Project Challenge and now superintendent of schools, East St. Louis.

Dr. Boyd Mitchell,

Superintendent of Schools

recently said: "Project Challenge is one of the most exciting and refreshing educational events that has occurred in East St. Louis. It provides teachers and students with a rare opportunity to express themselves . . . and pursue unlimited horizons in their quest for learning. We are waiting with a great deal of anticipation to see the test results to ascertain the new levels of achievement."

The ultimate evaluation of Project Challenge will be made by the federal programs supervisor of research and evaluation. Based, however, upon preliminary estimates of the situation, it is a foregone conclusion that Project Challenge will go down in educational history as an outstanding innovative adventure in learning...one that, hopefully, will be duplicated in hundreds of other communities in the United States to meet student needs.

Project Challenge volunteer tutor Jim Mussulman counsels a junior high school student.